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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1127
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3155
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SUBJECT: RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA SCORES POINTS AT KYRGYZ STUDENT
CONFERENCE

Classified By: Classified By: Amb. Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

¶1. (C) A conference on U.S. policy in Central Asia showed the success of Russian mass media domination in convincing Kyrgyz students that Russia is their friend and savior, and America only wants to weaken and exploit them. The conference was organized on November 13 by President Boris Yeltsin Kyrgyz Russian Slavic University's American Center. The school is one of the most prestigious in Kyrgyzstan and the recipient of aid from the Russian government. The conference attracted considerable media coverage and two (uninvited) Russian diplomats. According to the American Center director, the Russian Embassy, which had no known organizational role, was so pleased with the conference that it plans to publish highlights of student papers in the Russian Federation press.

¶2. (C) Students and professors from both Slavic University and the International University of Kyrgyzstan presented brief papers critical of U.S. policy in Central Asia. The papers were essentially a half-step above the slanted mass media reports produced in Russia which most Kyrgyz see, occasionally adding a reference to academic works of certain authors. Otherwise, they reflected the Russian media in content and tone, including just enough fact (e.g. the visit of a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State) to balance the vague theories of U.S. plans for world domination. The most popular author at the conference was Zbigniew Brzezinski, cited in five of eight papers as the main ideologue of American foreign policy in its desire to destroy Russia, starting with Central Asia.

¶3. (U) Presenters were skeptical of U.S. efforts to promote democracy in Central Asia and of the war in Afghanistan, saying that "America will use any excuse to keep its base in Kyrgyzstan." Another student identified the Civilian Response Corps as President Bush's formal plan to promote color revolutions. By contrast, Russia was generally, though not uniformly, praised by presenters. One student called it a "partner tested over seventy years of cooperation." Another student saw the "Russian base" in Kyrgyzstan (officially a CSTO base at Kant) as a real commitment to the security of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia against (unexplained) threats

from the outside -- an argument printed in Russian newspapers here. China was generally described in negative, fearful terms by students, and the European Union was accepted as a minor, but benign player.

COMMENT

14. (C) The conference showed the depth of Russian media penetration in Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyz universities are not known for teaching critical thinking skills, but the degree to which students from two of the better schools unquestioningly regurgitated Russian arguments was surprising. Students are not totally deprived of news or books from the outside world, but the Russian language media and schools reinforce a Russian world view of the U.S. as a destabilizing actor in the region. EmbOff was invited to make concluding remarks and addressed common misperceptions of U.S. policy. He received a positive response from students and professors interested in hearing a different viewpoint.

GFOELLER